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ABSTRACT

This is one of a series of implementation documents prepared in conjunction with the revised minimum standards adopted in 1983 by the Ohio State Board of Education. The minimum standards allow school districts to provide educational options to meet specialized student needs or interests; accordingly, the purpose of this document is to describe various educational options and to provide guidelines for implementing and administering them. Options defined and discussed in detail include (1) correspondence courses, (2) educational travel, (3) independent study, (4) mentor programs, and (5) tutorial programs. The subsequent section lists and explains the specific minimum standards governing educational options. This is followed by sections discussing assessment of current educational needs of students, development of board of education policies, and procedures for administrative implementation. (TE)

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EA 017 448

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FOREWORD

With the adoption of the 1983 minimum standards, the State Board of Education has established conditions to promote a general education of high quality in all chartered schools. The State Board of Education recognizes its responsibility to give direction to the system of education in the state. At the same time, there is flexibility within standards to establish educational programs that are responsive to local needs.

Minimum Standards for Elementary and Secondary Schools 1983 provide the potential for greatly improving education in Ohio. That potential can be reached through well-structured local and state leadership. To assist responsible implementation of minimum standards, staff in the Ohio Department of Education have prepared an implementation series consisting of fourteen documents. A distinction is made among the publications. Only one, *Procedures for School Evaluations,* is a compliance document. It contains the standards in a format readily used for self-evaluation. School personnel will find information about what is needed for a district and schools within the district to comply with standards. In the remaining publications, an effort is made to specify what the standard requires. Additional information, guidelines, procedural steps, and sample forms may go beyond what the standard requires. The purpose is to assist the local planning process, not to prescribe what shall be in every school in Ohio.

Minimum standards address the public's increasing expectations for schools with a requirement for competency based education in English composition, mathematics, and reading. Three of the publications, *Process Model for Course of Study, Competency Assessment and Testing,* and *Intervention* are aligned in addressing competency based education. A number of options are described for local consideration.

Appreciation is extended to school personnel who contributed to these publications by sharing their time, expertise, and materials. Appreciation is also extended to staff members who worked untold hours to make these publications possible.

Franklin B. Walter

Franklin B. Walter
Superintendent of Public Instruction

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INTRODUCTION

I. INTRODUCTION

The twentieth century is producing unprecedented changes in the philosophical and practical approaches to education. New and improved instructional methods continue to evolve in response to what and how students should learn.

Recognition of the need for an increasingly effective educational program which serves the needs of each student underscores the value of varied processes for delivering educational services.

Public sentiment, according to surveys, indicates that greater attention should be directed to basic skills instruction and development of minimum levels of competency. While supporting the need for basic skills, other advocates suggest that many students have exceeded minimal levels and should be afforded expanded instruction in foreign languages, sciences, advanced mathematics, humanities, and the arts.

The authority and responsibility to enact curricular and instructional decisions to benefit students reside with local districts and schools. The continuing challenge is to enable students to develop competencies, interests, and attitudes needed to further their goals. The use of educational options represents one method by which expanded learning opportunities can be provided.

The intent of educational options is to allow educators, scientists, artists, business persons, parents, and others to work together to prepare students for a rapidly changing world in which potentials can best be realized. The options outlined in succeeding pages may be provided through a variety of methods as described in the minimum standards. Additional appropriate options may be identified by boards of education and school administrators.

Educational options may provide an opportunity for students to learn in an "independent" or "individual" setting, and to study or work with recognized experts in specific fields, subject to school and parental approval. A combination of academic work and "action learning" in field-based settings could create a motivating and personal learning atmosphere in which students seek to improve their abilities to conceptualize solutions to situations or problems and search for answers in less traditional ways.

Educational options permit expanded community involvement in the educational process, increase opportunities for students to match the pace of technological development, and provide a broader base for earning promotion and credits necessary for graduation. With increased attention to the learning needs of students and a cooperative approach to meeting these needs, the opportunities and rewards of a quality education may be more readily achieved.

PURPOSE

II. PURPOSE OF EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS

School districts may provide educational options to meet specialized student needs or interests under Rule 3301-35-02(C) of the Minimum Standards for Elementary and Secondary Schools. The provision of educational options is not required; therefore, the policy of the board of education will determine what options, if any, will be available to students of the district.

The standards define educational options as experiences or activities which may be provided in accordance with board policy to supplement the regular school program. Such options may include:

- correspondence course
- educational travel
- independent study
- mentor program
- tutorial program

This listing is not exclusive. Other options may be defined and offered by the board of education provided all requirements specified by the minimum standards are met.

Educational options may be used as additional curricular tools to expand, enrich, and improve students' experiences and perspectives. Opportunities for students to participate in learning situations which utilize business and community resources may now be linked to promotion or translated into credit-earning courses through the application of educational options.

For example, members of a small independent study group may work to bring about change in the economic condition of the community. Students will find that they must not only learn about economics but also about sociology, psychology, and governmental operations. Credit may be earned in several curricular areas as agreed to by the school and the student. Experiences of this type will create opportunities for students to move from the field back to the classroom not merely to analyze and discuss strategies for change but also to probe personal and public values.

In providing such experiences, one consideration should be to maintain the educational standards adopted by the district through its course of study, including the integrity of credits earned and applied toward the high school diploma. Educational options hold value only insofar as they are wisely administered and supervised to assure that appropriate educational outcomes are attained.

PURPOSE

Options are defined and discussed in detail in Part III of this document. In addition, assessment of current educational needs, guidelines for development of board of education policies, and procedures for administrative implementation and evaluation are included. Each option has its own characteristics and uses and may be used in conjunction with one or more of the other options.

The educational options section of the minimum standards is intended to apply not to activities employed by an individual teacher as an integral part of classroom instruction but rather to instructional plans designed to meet the unique needs of individual students.

DEFINITIONS

III. DEFINITIONS OF TERMS, PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS, AND USES

A. Correspondence Course

Rule 3301-35-01 (D)(1) Definition: *Systematic instruction by mail or electronic media between a pupil and instructor in accordance with board policy.*

General Description: Correspondence study offers a prescribed pattern of learning assignments sequentially completed by the student and returned to the provider(s) for evaluation. In addition to printed communications carried by mail, the instruction may include audio or visual instruction provided by tapes, television, or other electronic devices. The rule requires that a certificated teacher evaluate pupil performance in a correspondence course.

Institutions which provide correspondence study include colleges and universities, state departments of education, and independent profit and nonprofit organizations. The Ohio Department of Education does not offer correspondence courses and is not authorized to prepare a list of "approved" or recommended programs.

All correspondence schools offering service in Ohio must be registered with the State Board of School and College Registration. This registration, however, does not imply that the course work is applicable to elementary and secondary education.

Program Characteristics:

- serves elementary, secondary, and college levels
- offers a flexible time frame within which the student completes the course
- may serve remedial, regular, or advanced study purposes
- may supplement course offerings provided by the school
- "self-contained" instructional programs enable the student to proceed with a minimum of outside materials, resources, and assistance

Summary of Uses: Correspondence courses permit continuing education for out-of-school students, for students who travel with parents during the school year because of the demands of the parents' occupations, or for students who cannot regularly attend school for a variety of approved reasons. Additionally, a school may find that a subject not included in its curriculum can be offered through a correspondence program. Correspondence courses are designed to provide appropriate course content to meet the students' needs and contribute to goals of grade promotion and credit for graduation.

DEFINITIONS

B. Educational Travel

Rule 3301-35-01 (D)(2) Definition: *An educational activity involving travel in accordance with board policy under the direction of a person approved by the board and parent.*

General Description: Unique student needs or circumstances may suggest the value and appropriateness of educational travel in achieving specific objectives. Travel should be evaluated for purposes of grade promotion and high school credit in terms of the district philosophy, educational goals, and course of study. The rule requires that a certificated teacher evaluate pupil performance in educational travel.

Educational travel may encompass:

- travel as part of a group organized and supervised by school staff under the sponsorship of the board of education
- travel as part of an organized education group independent of board of education sponsorship
- travel which may be associated with extended family activities and/or employment

Program Characteristics:

- appropriate for all grade levels
- frequently supplements rather than supplants the instructional program
- variety of supervision possibilities
- may be related to any field of study

Summary of Uses: Educational travel serves students who find that circumstances allow them to achieve specific academic goals while traveling independently or as part of an organized group. The use of this option should be based on decisions made concerning the applicability of the travel experience for purposes of course credit and grade promotion. Consistency with the educational philosophy and goals of the district, as well as the needs of the student, is essential.

DEFINITIONS

C. Independent Study

Rule 3301-35-01 (D)(3) Definition: *An educational activity involving advanced or indepth work by an individual pupil under the direction of a certificated member of the school staff in accordance with board policy.*

General Description: Independent study as an educational option is based on recognition of the benefits students gain by developing skills as self-directed learners. Independent study represents an individual approach which permits a student to pursue one or more academic areas beyond the scope and depth of the course of study offered by the school. The rule requires that a certificated teacher provide instruction and evaluate pupil performance in independent study.

The role of the teacher/coordinator, which may include development of the educational plan and evaluation of student performance, should be extended to ongoing guidance as the student assumes increasing responsibility for learning. The teacher/coordinator should be competent in the selected field of study and possess skill in establishing a stimulating learning relationship and environment. The teacher's capacity to be flexible in designing and modifying instructional patterns is a valuable asset.

Program Characteristics:

- advanced or honors level study
- supplements group processes
- independent of organized class
- self-directed, individualized study
- highly motivated students
- professional personnel serve as resources

Summary of Uses: Independent study recognizes the value of the student's development of skills for self-direction and allows students to pursue one or more curricular areas individually. Independent study includes activities which supplement group instructional processes and permit students to expand personal knowledge in a specific area. Exploration of subject fields and development of special talents are additional uses of the independent study option. This option provides an opportunity for students to pursue educational purposes emphasizing curricular content, learning processes, and personal-social goals.

DEFINITIONS

D. Mentor Program

Rule 3301-35-01 (D)(4) Definition: *An educational activity including advanced or indepth work by an individual pupil in accordance with board policy under the direction of a noncertificated individual. Mentors shall be individuals selected in accordance with board criteria and subject to parent approval.*

General Description: A mentor program as an educational option is based on the recognition that students may benefit from individual study with a person within a particular tradition, discipline, profession, or craft. A mentor program represents a form of individualized study and permits students to pursue specific curricular areas in depth and beyond the scope of the course of study offered by the school. The rule requires that a certificated teacher evaluate pupil performance in a mentor program.

The role of the mentor includes guiding the student toward experiences where challenges can be met, skills developed, problems solved, and relationships established. The mentor's responsibilities are to serve the student as a tutor, model, advocate, and friend. The student and mentor share their time, work, interests, and enthusiasm with each other.

Program Characteristics:

- advanced study
- independent of organized class
- a one-to-one relationship between student and professional
- high level of student responsibility for scheduling time and performance
- highly motivated students
- professional and community personnel serve as resources

Summary of Uses: Mentor programs provide guidance for students who have demonstrated outstanding skills or interests with unique opportunities to be matched with persons who have special skills, interests, and achievements. A mentor program often incorporates independent study in a specific area which is guided by a person recognized as an expert in that area. Careful matching of student and mentor is an integral part of this option.

DEFINITIONS

E. Tutorial Program

Rule 3301-35-01 (D)(5) Definition: *An educational activity involving work by an individual pupil under the direction of a certificated teacher in accordance with board policy.*

General Description: A tutorial program allows students to receive remedial and supplementary instruction to correct deficiencies or expand specific skills. The tutorial program is a form of individualized study which permits students to receive special instruction based on individual needs. The rule requires that a certificated teacher provide instruction and evaluate pupil performance in a tutorial program.

Tutorial programs may also serve students who cannot attend school on a continuous basis for specified reasons such as parental travel, physical impairment, home responsibilities, or employment. Tutorial programs may also apply to instruction in areas of study which are not part of the school district curriculum.

Program Characteristics:

- emphasizes remedial instruction
- supplements instruction or activities
- allows regular instruction for out-of-school students
- organized outside of classroom

Summary of Uses: A tutorial program allows specific assistance for students in meeting course requirements and attaining grade promotion. This assistance may accommodate needs for remedial instruction, supplementary work to expand skills, or additional instruction deemed necessary and appropriate for an individual student's educational welfare.

F. Other Local Options

To supplement the defined educational options, school districts may provide additional options to meet specialized student learning needs or interests unique to a target population, the district, or geographic region. By identifying and adopting additional options, the board of education enhances the flexibility of its educational program, as it makes more opportunities available to students.

Should a board of education authorize an educational option permitting a student to enroll in college or university courses, credits earned within the required 18 units may not be counted for both high school and college credit purposes.

All local options must meet the standards pertaining to parent approval, approval of an instructional plan, and the maximum units of credit which may be applied for graduation.

IV. STANDARDS AND EXPLANATIONS

Rule 3301-35-02 (C) of the minimum standards provides authorization for the superintendent to approve an educational option upon evidence that the prescribed standards are met. The procedures established by the school for receiving, reviewing, and approving options should include compliance with the standards listed below.

Rule 3301-35-02 (C)(1)(a): *The parent has approved participation for any pupil under the age of eighteen.*

Parent approval of student participation in an educational option assures that both the school and parent are in agreement as to the needs to be served, benefits to be derived, and conditions under which the option will be exercised. Participation of school personnel, the student, and the parent in identifying the educational needs and the processes by which the educational objectives will be achieved enhances the likelihood of student success. The parent approval should be in writing and may include approval of the instructional plan. A copy of the instructional plan and the parent approval should be retained in the school files. A similar approval process for students 18 years of age or more may be appropriate; however, approval by the parent is not required.

Rule 3301-35-02 (C)(1)(b): *An instructional plan has been submitted prior to pupil participation.*

School publications including student handbooks, registration information, and newsletters should notify students and parents that only educational options which have had prior approval may be considered for purposes of promotion and graduation credit. This requirement could also be stressed in orientation sessions for new students and their parents.

Rule 3301-35-02 (C)(1)(b)(i): *The instructional plan shall include instructional objectives.*

Written instructional objectives provide the basis for determining the educational content and experiences which are to be made available with the option. Instructional objectives also provide the basis for evaluating student performance.

Generally, the instructional objectives will be developed by school personnel and reviewed with the student and parent. The objectives should be concise, specific, complete, and written in a form readily understood by all who share a responsibility for implementing, modifying, and evaluating the instructional plan.

As they are developed, measurable instructional objectives should precisely identify the instructional focus of the option and evaluation process.

STANDARDS

Rule 3301-35-02 (C)(1)(b)(ii): *The instructional plan shall include...an outline including major instructional activities, materials, and environments.*

Correspondence courses may follow a program of predetermined instructional activities. Educational travel, independent study, and mentor programs represent highly individualized programs. A tutoring program may follow the district course of study. The content and instructional processes of these programs should be written to serve the educational objectives and needs of the student.

In addition to instructional activities, the outline should identify materials, equipment, resources, and facilities essential for the student to successfully complete the educational plan. The approval process should include consideration of the resources and conditions needed to complete the option and clarify responsibility for providing materials, equipment, resources, and facilities.

Rule 3301-35-02 (C)(1)(b)(iii): *The instructional plan shall include ...a description of criteria and methods for assessing pupil performance.*

Evaluation of student performance measures learning outcomes based on the instructional objectives. Decisions regarding promotion or granting of credit should be based on the degree to which the student has been successful in fulfilling the instructional plan.

Consideration may be given to the following types of assessment in preparing the educational plan.

- **Preassessments** are generally diagnostic in nature and are administered prior to instruction. The results provide the basis for identifying appropriate educational objectives and instructional activities.
- **Formative assessments** conducted during the course of instruction may serve in making adjustments in instructional activities, materials, or methods.
- **Summative assessments** given at appropriate intervals during the instructional period or following completion of the plan are designed to determine the degree to which the student has achieved the instructional objectives. These assessments provide a basis for decisions involving promotion, retention, and granting of credit.

Methods for assessing student performance may include, but are not limited to:

- written examination (pencil and paper tests, quizzes, standardized tests)
- evaluation of product (art form, musical composition, industrial arts project)
- research (scientific, historical)
- proficiency development (music, dance, language)
- behavioral changes (attitude inventories, student self-assessment, teacher observation of student behavior)

Rule 3301-35-02 (C)(1)(c): *A certificated teacher shall provide instruction and evaluate pupil performance in tutorial programs and independent studies.*

The entire program of instruction offered through tutorial or independent study, together with the evaluation of student performance, shall be provided by a person who holds a valid Ohio teaching certificate. The selection and assignment of a teacher to provide instruction should involve consideration of the areas of academic preparation and experience which will best serve in providing competent instruction. The experience and competence of the teacher should be utilized in designing the instructional plan as well as in providing direct instruction to the student. Appropriate certification information should be on file in the administrative office.

In conducting the instructional activities as specified by the educational option, the certificated teacher is responsible to the superintendent or the superintendent's designee.

Rule 3301-35-02 (C)(1)(d): *A certificated teacher shall evaluate pupil performance in correspondence courses, educational travel, and mentor programs.*

Since instruction for these options is not necessarily provided by a certificated teacher, the educational plan should be comprehensive in its description of instructional objectives, activities, evaluation methods, and criteria. A clear description of the involvement of mentors and others who will be directing the instructional process should be included in the educational plan. Teachers assigned to evaluate student performance should be involved in the instructional plan development.

The selection and assignment of a teacher to evaluate student performance should include a consideration of the academic preparation, experiences, and competencies which a person must have to make an appropriate evaluation based on the objectives, instructional activities, and performance expectations.

STANDARDS

Rule 3301-35-02 (C)(2): *Promotion and retention decisions regarding pupils in kindergarten through eighth grade shall consider pupil performance relative to the objectives of an option.*

Locally adopted policies govern matters of student promotion. Educational options approved in kindergarten through grade eight may serve as a substitute instructional plan for a specific subject or a combination of subjects or be supplementary to the ongoing program of instruction.

Successful completion of an educational option approved as a substitute for one or more subjects should be based on the criteria and methods for assessing the student performance as specified in the instructional plan.

Rule 3301-35-02 (C)(3): *A maximum of six units of credit may be applied toward the eighteen units required for graduation in paragraph (B)(6) of this rule. No more than four of the six units may be applied toward requirements specified in paragraphs (B)(6)(a) to (B)(6)(f) of this rule.*

The rule limits the number of units of credit earned by educational options which may be applied to required graduation units. With 18 units required, no more than six units may be educational options. Schools requiring more than 18 units may apply educational options to the units beyond 18 in accordance with board policy.

In addition, the requirements for high school graduation earned in grades nine through twelve shall include the following:

- English language arts, three units
- health, one-half unit
- mathematics, two units
- physical education, one-half unit
- science, one unit
- social studies, two units which shall include:
  American history, one-half unit, and
  American government, one-half unit.

No more than four units of the above specified units may be earned through educational options.

ASSESSMENT OF NEEDS

V. ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS

A board of education giving consideration to the use or development of educational options should make provision for the assessment of student learning needs and seek to determine if the current curriculum is sufficient for meeting the identified needs.

By common definition, an educational needs assessment is a procedure or process which results in the identification of documented or perceived needs of students, the faculty, or the school district. The process may involve the use of various measurements and activities to obtain the information necessary to define the discrepancy between "what is" and "what should be."

Both formal and informal approaches may be used in the assessment process. Formal assessment measures could include standardized achievement tests, achievement/ability comparisons, career inventories, and aptitude tests. Informal measurements to determine the effectiveness of the current curriculum could include staff and student appraisals, follow-up surveys of recent graduates, and community surveys.

A need for specific educational options which extend or supplement the existing curriculum may become evident as a review is made of student absenteeism and dropout rates. The varied approaches to learning which are offered by different options may be useful with students who are experiencing difficulty in adjusting to normal school routines.

As student needs are documented and analyzed, school district personnel can make informed decisions about the possible inclusion of alternative programs to assist students in achieving the most productive education possible. Can existing programs be altered or expanded to meet the identified needs? Can a positive program of educational options with long term benefits be developed, or will the effort be characterized as a "short cut" for promotion and/or graduation? Is it more cost effective to initiate a program of educational options than to conduct specialized classes which have minimal enrollment?

The appropriateness, need, and uses of educational options will vary from school to school and district to district. If the assessment process does not identify educational needs and circumstances which can be effectively served by educational options, the district may delay action to implement a program until such time as a need exists or is anticipated.

DEVELOPMENT OF POLICIES

VI. DEVELOPMENT OF BOARD OF EDUCATION POLICIES

A board of education, through its school district administration, should thoroughly discuss the merits and limitations of educational options with staff, parents, students, and community representatives. Such consultation should cover the options defined in the standards and other options which may be appropriate and available.

Based on assessment results and local response, boards of education giving consideration to the initiation/development of any of the educational options should establish policies compatible with the standards. Such policies should be consistent with and reflective of the adopted philosophy, educational goals, and course of study of the district. This foundation would subsequently facilitate the organization of a comprehensive program for meeting student learning needs.

The board of education may want to consider the following policy issues related to the establishment of educational options:

- authorization of educational options
- overall scope/limitations of the options
- student eligibility at elementary and secondary levels
- administrative responsibilities for program development and implementation
- staff participation and responsibility
- local financial support
- provisions for program evaluation

PROCEDURES

VII. PROCEDURES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLEMENTATION

In addition to the need for board of education policies, many issues relating to administrative procedures must be addressed. Frequently an issue may have both policy and procedural implications.

The superintendent is authorized by minimum standards to approve a student's participation in an educational option. In approving options, the superintendent is governed by the requirements specified in the standards and by additional policies adopted by the local board of education.

In an effort to ensure timely, equitable, and appropriate review of all requests to pursue educational options, specific procedures or guidelines should be developed. Written procedures may include, but are not limited to, the following considerations:

Availability of Educational Options

- dissemination of information to students, parents, and staff
- types of options offered
- grade levels at which options are available
- student eligibility criteria for specific options
- options beyond the district course of study
- early high school graduation

Process for Approval of Options

- initiating an option request
- responsibility for accepting or rejecting an option
- process for accepting or rejecting an option
- appeal process for options denied
- modifying or rescinding previously approved options

Parent Approval

- process for obtaining parent approval
- parent role for students over 18 years of age
- parent role for married students under 18 years of age

Timelines

- date(s) for submitting program applications
- schedule for administrative decision making
- minimum and maximum time frame for the instructional process

Use of Options in Grades K-8

- procedures for use at the elementary school level
- options for purposes of promotion
- limitations to the number of options allowed at the elementary level
- instructional time required
- grading system to be employed
- frequency and method of reporting pupil progress

PROCEDURES

Credit Allocation for Options
- number of credits secondary students may earn
- options as substitutes for required/elective classes
- instructional time required
- grading system to be employed
- frequency and method of reporting student progress
- earning multiple credits for single options

Selection of Staff or Other Option Providers
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- effect on personnel contracts
- involvement of educators and others external to district
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- grade level certification
- criteria for and acceptability of noncertificated option providers
- parent as instructional provider
- access to student records by nonstaff members
- compensation for instructional services, if appropriate
- compensation for evaluation responsibilities, if appropriate

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- legal responsibilities of school
- records of enrollment and attendance
- student and parent responsibilities

Evaluation of the Educational Options Program
- supervision and monitoring
- delegation of administrative responsibilities
- periodic reporting to the board of education
- responsibility for evaluating individual educational options
- administrative evaluation
- reassessing student needs
- board of education review of the options program

NOTES

NOTES

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